

THE FRENCH ADMINISTRATION OF INDO-CHINA

of the School's twentieth anniversary it was the object of violent criticism. Opponents claimed that its Director and teaching staff had never been nearer to Indo-China or Africa than their offices in the Colonial Ministry. Students fenced, swam, and rode horseback, as preparation for a career from which they could not be ejected even if they proved to be incompetent. Once in the colonies, these graduates formed a clique which scorned and was scorned by officials who had risen from the ranks, to the general detriment of the colony which they had been sent to serve. No one wanted the School to disappear, but only to mend its ways, which at the time seemed to be the last of its desires.

Competence in native languages was a most serious void in functionary training, even at the Colonial School. Beau and Klobukowsky had frequently denounced this defect, but not until it was voiced in the budget reports of Messimy and Violette did this criticism percolate into Metropolitan consciousness. The first Frenchman in the country had encountered almost insurmountable obstacles in learning the language without the aid of dictionaries, lexicons, and interpreters.

The natives could say what could be pointed to, but did not grasp or indicate abstract ideas. Missionaries were the pioneers in this field, and their accomplishment showed what perseverance could do. The first governors realized how important were the contacts between races and the importance of language in this regard. But it was part of the assimilationist creed that it was easier for some millions of natives to learn Annamite. Since the school system was unable to afford the

native masses a chance to learn French, inducements were offered to functionaries to make some linguistic efforts themselves. This was quite ineffective, for the premiums were not large, and Annamite is one of the world's most difficult languages. Graduates of the Colonial School had been trained in the rudiments of Annamite, but practice was lacking. Those who studied Annamite might be assigned to Cambodia, or given office work that only required them to speak French, so the reward of such effort was negligible. Nor did magistrates who rotated from one colony to another, often at two-year intervals, find it worth their while to try dispensing with an interpreter's services. The trend towards deceur trafettion threw an emphasis on provincial office-holding, which gave renewed life to the whole language piobteca. Sawraut*'s sincere efforts to stiffen the language requirements, for entry and promotion in the adiiiiistratioii, were nullified by his colleagues* 'Go-opex)8tioiii to djb~